

IN THE CLAIMS:

The status of each claim that has been introduced in the above-referenced application is identified in the ensuing listing of the claims. This listing of the claims replaces all previously submitted claims listings.

1-16. (Canceled)

17. (Original) A method for thinning a semiconductor substrate, comprising:
forming a support structure on an active surface of the semiconductor substrate;
removing material from a back side of the semiconductor substrate to form a thinned
semiconductor substrate; and
transporting the thinned semiconductor substrate for further processing.

18. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein forming the support structure
comprises forming a support ring on the active surface adjacent to an outer peripheral edge of the
semiconductor substrate.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein forming the support ring comprises
forming the support ring such that each semiconductor device that has been fabricated on the
active surface is located within an inner periphery of the support ring and is exposed
therethrough.

20. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein forming the support structure
includes forming a layer of packaging material over the active surface and extending radially
outward to at least an outer peripheral edge of the semiconductor substrate.

21. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 17, wherein forming the support
structure comprises forming the support structure to include an outer peripheral portion that
extends beyond ~~the outer~~ an outer peripheral edge of the semiconductor substrate.

22. (Original) The method of claim 21, wherein forming the support structure further comprises forming the outer peripheral portion to include a downwardly extending portion located laterally adjacent to the outer peripheral edge of the semiconductor substrate.

23. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein forming the support structure comprises:
forming a layer comprising unconsolidated material over at least an outer peripheral portion of the active surface; and
at least partially consolidating the unconsolidated material within at least outer peripheral regions of the layer.

24. (Original) The method of claim 23, wherein at least partially consolidated the unconsolidated material comprises directing a focused energy beam onto at least the outer peripheral regions of the layer.

25. (Original) The method of claim 24, wherein directing the focused energy beam comprises directing a laser beam onto at least the outer peripheral regions of the layer.

26. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein forming the support structure comprises stereolithographically forming the support structure.

27. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein forming the support structure comprises:
positioning a preformed film of support material over the active surface; and
removing selected regions of the preformed film.

28. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein forming the support structure comprises molding the support structure on the active surface.

29. (Original) The method of claim 17, further comprising:
securing the semiconductor substrate to a support with the active surface facing the support and
the support structure abutting at least one surface or feature of the support.
30. (Original) The method of claim 29, wherein securing the semiconductor substrate
comprises applying a negative pressure to the active surface.
31. (Original) The method of claim 29, wherein securing the semiconductor substrate
includes sealing the support structure against the at least one surface or feature.
32. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein removing material from the back
side of the semiconductor substrate comprises at least one of chemically and mechanically
removing material from the back side.
33. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein removing material from the back
side of the semiconductor substrate comprises back grinding.
34. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein the support structure supports the
thinned semiconductor substrate during transporting thereof.
- 35-69. (Canceled)